

## **9. New Forest**

### **9.1 About New Forest**

New Forest district is the largest in Hampshire, occupying its south-western corner. Physically it is almost detached from the rest of the county and its boundaries with Wiltshire, Dorset and the sea are much longer than its Hampshire boundaries (Test Valley and Southampton). The forest was famously created by William I for the purpose of deer hunting and the place where William II was killed by an arrow is marked by the Rufus Stone.

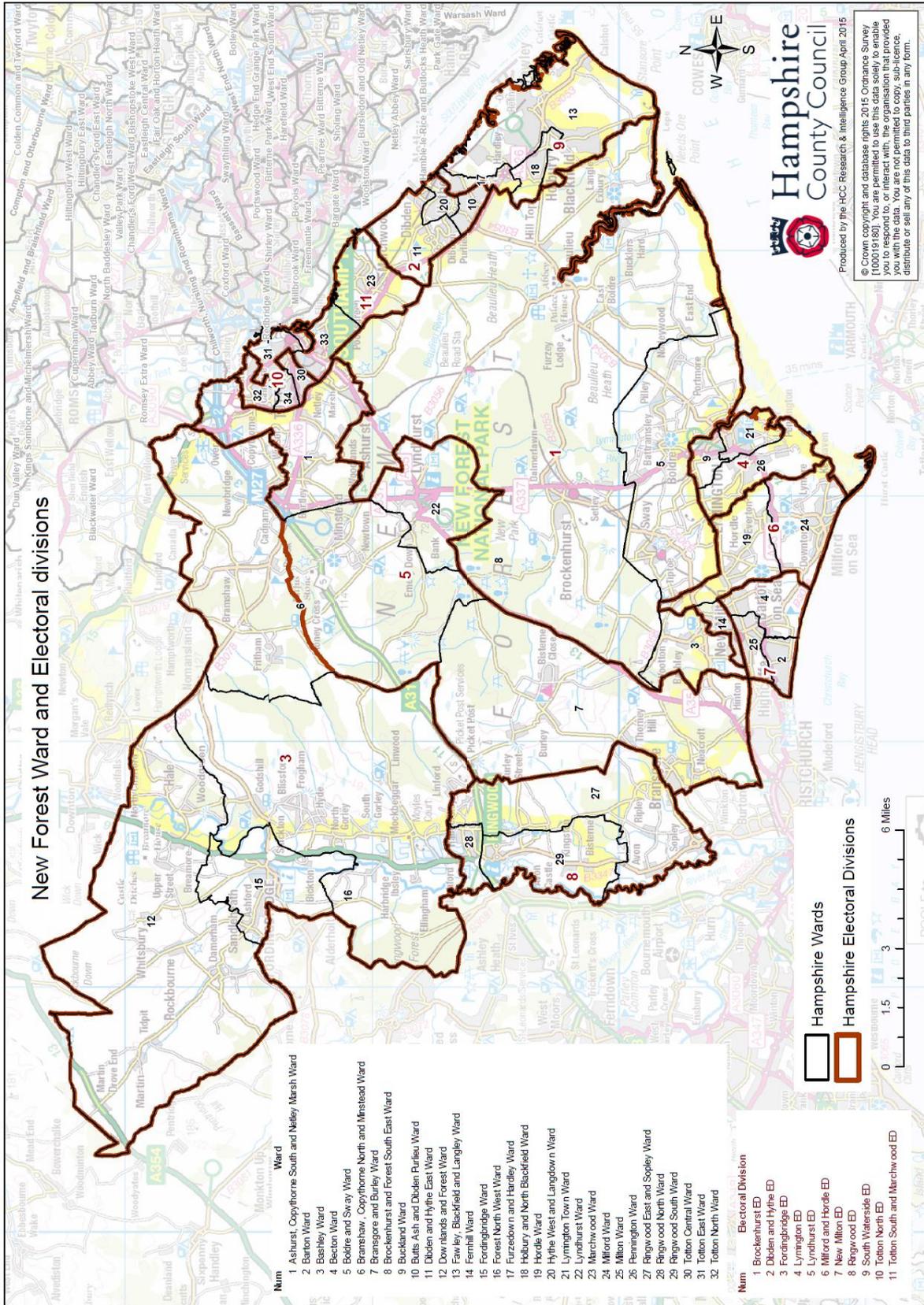
The most significant feature of the district is the New Forest National Park, which is almost all contained within the district. The heathlands, grasslands, wetlands and woodlands of the National Park dominate the interior of the district and determine its usage and development. The unique governance and historic traditions of the New Forest, with several groups and organisations whose rights are laid down by Act of Parliament, make being a County Councillor in the New Forest somewhat different.

With a 2015 population of nearly 180,000 and a median age of 47, New Forest is the oldest and populous district in Hampshire, although at current rates of growth Basingstoke & Deane will overtake it in the next few years. New Forest is primarily rural in terms of its area, but there are two large built-up areas along Southampton Water and the western Solent. Significant settlements include Totton, Hythe, Lyndhurst, New Milton and Ringwood. Only a fraction of the district's residents live in the National Park and house prices in the rural areas are among the highest in Hampshire.

Economically and in travel terms the New Forest looks in several different directions. The principal corridor is from the Southampton area down and across to the Bournemouth area. The cross-border links in this southwest corner are extremely strong, reflecting the fact that until 1974 (within living memory for many local residents) the boroughs of Bournemouth and Christchurch were part of Hampshire. There are also strong connections to Salisbury to the north, and to the Isle of Wight. The Waterside area is home to some significant energy and marine-related industry including the Fawley refinery and bases for companies serving the Port of Southampton.

The South West Main Line crosses the district and there are people who commute daily to London from as far away as Brockenhurst and New Milton. There is also a shuttle service between Brockenhurst and Lymington connecting to the Isle of Wight ferry from Lymington to Yarmouth.

Map of Existing County Council Divisions in New Forest



## 9.2 County Council Divisions in New Forest

There are currently eleven County Councillors from New Forest, each representing one division, and the County Council's proposal is that this will remain the case.

### Existing divisions – registered and forecast electorate

Division name	Members	2014 Electorate	2014 Variance	2021 Electorate Forecast	2021 Variance
Brockenhurst	1	11,400	-12.8%	11,302	-18.4%
Dibden & Hythe	1	14,640	+11.9%	14,371	+3.8%
Fordingbridge	1	11,417	-12.7%	11,300	-18.4%
Lymington	1	12,398	-5.2%	13,174	-4.9%
Lyndhurst	1	12,345	-5.6%	12,875	-7.0%
Milford & Hordle	1	13,774	+5.3%	13,877	+0.2%
New Milton	1	14,037	+7.3%	14,511	+4.8%
Ringwood	1	11,924	-8.8%	12,227	-11.7%
South Waterside	1	12,728	-2.7%	12,602	-9.0%
Totton North	1	13,012	-0.5%	12,890	-6.9%
Totton South & Marchwood	1	14,223	+8.7%	13,781	-0.5%
<b>Total</b>	11	141,898		142,910	

Many of the New Forest divisions, particularly rural divisions such as Brockenhurst or Fordingbridge, are forecast to have a 2021 electorate well below the Hampshire average, and in normal circumstances we would look to expand the extent of those divisions in order to achieve greater electoral equality. However, there are a range of unique considerations that apply in the New Forest and make enlarging the electorate of any of the eleven divisions problematic.

For example, there are particular problems of representational complexity and delay in decision-making in the divisions which are located wholly or partly inside the New Forest National Park, in terms of the necessity to consult with the following agencies who have powers of veto, on even the most minor of matters such as the siting of broadband cabinets, grit bins for winter weather or the slightest re-alignment of country lanes etc. These are Natural England, the Court of Verderers, the Forestry Commission, the National Park Authority, New Forest District Council and parish councils, as well as the Commoners Defence Association who have much influence, and rights under statute. This creates an unusually heavy and complicated caseload for many New Forest County Councillors.

Policy constraints in the New Forest also cause difficulty in creating divisions with more equal electorates. The National Park Authority for New Forest has adopted a policy which effectively bans housing development within its boundary. This places development pressure on the Waterside and Lymington areas, which are outside its boundary, and causes Brockenhurst and Fordingbridge to continue with a static or reducing electorate, and Lyndhurst and Ringwood to increase by only 530 and 303 voters respectively over the next six years.

Equally, the unique geography of New Forest district, with its huge and largely empty interior and limited transport network, constrains the alteration of boundaries. Urban areas on the Waterside and the south coast requiring expansion cannot satisfactorily be expanded into the National Park because the low population density means they would have to stretch miles into completely different terrain and communities to achieve any significant increase. Similarly, expanding a rural division would entail huge geographic expansion, to unmanageable proportions, when the existing divisions are hard enough to serve as a Councillor due to their size. In setting division boundaries we are also conscious that the boundaries of the National Park have centuries of common acceptance behind them, and would wish not to infringe them further if possible.

Finally, a general principle has been adopted across the county that it is practical and logical for County Councillors in urban areas to have a larger electorate, because the travel distances and community facilities are located in a compact area. The County Council's proposals therefore envisage the urban divisions continuing to have a higher electorate than the rural divisions.

In adopting this principle the County Council is relying on the principle outlined in the Commission's guidance document *How to propose a pattern of wards* page 11: "We will look at the geographic size of the ward or division and try to ensure that it is not so large that it would be difficult for a councillor to represent."

For these reasons the County Council's proposal for New Forest is to retain the current boundaries for all divisions, and to retain the current division names.

The proposals for New Forest were co-ordinated by Councillor Jacqui England, the Member for Lymington, and were discussed with and agreed by all current New Forest County Councillors.

### 9.3 **Brockenhurst**

#### **2021 Electorate Forecast: 11,302 (-18.4% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers almost all of the New Forest National Park south of Lyndhurst. It is the fourth-largest division in Hampshire, covering 85 square miles in a rough triangle formed by the A35, the A326 and the National Park's coastal boundary. Brockenhurst and Sway are the largest settlements. The London-Weymouth railway runs through the middle of Brockenhurst and there are three stations in the division. This division currently includes the following wards:

- Bashley
- Boldre & Sway
- Brockenhurst & Forest South East

Communities in the New Forest are self-contained and very distinct in nature and are centred upon villages or hamlets. Those in the Brockenhurst Division have little in common with the Waterside to its east, little in common with Lyndhurst to its south, very little with New Milton to its west, nor with Lyndhurst to its north. The distances between the Waterside, Lyndhurst and the western areas cover miles of open countryside or forest, and represent natural gaps and boundaries.

As noted above, any large rural division brings particular challenges for elected representatives. The Brockenhurst division:

- has eight parish councils, so attending throughout the year in the evenings and in all weathers entails up to 50-mile round trips for the County Councillor;
- has a major sixth form college, attracting 5,000 students;
- hosts the New Forest Show, attracting 90,000 visitors;
- is a major railhead; and
- has a number of camping sites which contribute to some 13 million visitor days per annum in the New Forest.

Such numbers bring problems for the infrastructure of the division and for its facilities in general. Each of the above factors, in addition to the considerations listed at the start of this chapter, increases the workload of the County Councillor; taken together they make the present Brockenhurst division difficult for one Councillor to service. On these grounds no increase to its boundaries and its electorate is proposed.

### **Proposal for Brockenhurst**

Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 11,302 (-18.4% against forecast Hampshire average)**

#### 9.4 **Dibden & Hythe**

**2021 Electorate Forecast: 14,371 (+3.8% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers the settlement of Hythe and small outlying areas. It has Southampton Water on its eastern boundary, the A326 and National Park on the western side, Marchwood to the north and Fawley to the south. Hythe is connected to central Southampton by a ferry service. Dibden & Hythe Division includes a large empty area along Southampton Water known as Dibden Bay. This division currently includes the following wards:

- Butts Ash & Dibden Purlieu
- Dibden & Hythe East
- Hythe West & Langdown

Dibden & Hythe has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is only slightly above the average in Hampshire, so no change is necessary to achieve electoral equality. Furthermore, it is difficult to see where change could be achieved without rupturing community identity. The only potential direction is north into/south from Marchwood, but this would entail leaping the Military Port with its railway into a completely separate community.

Councillor Malcolm Wade, the Member for Dibden & Hythe, reports that residents have not forgotten that during a previous boundary review, in order to achieve electoral equality a portion of Hythe and Dibden Parish was transferred to the division now called South Waterside. That portion of Hythe and Dibden (still a Hythe and Dibden Parish ward) is now represented by a County Councillor who represents the area centred around Fawley, an entirely different community. The local Member's view is that this has not worked and is concerned that local governance may not be well served by "slicing off portions of one community and giving it to a larger community".

On these grounds no changes to Dibden & Hythe are proposed.

### **Proposal for Dibden & Hythe**

- Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 14,371 (+3.8% against forecast Hampshire average)**

### 9.5 **Fordingbridge**

**2021 Electorate Forecast: 11,300 (-18.4% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division is the second-largest in Hampshire and covers the north-western section of New Forest district. The division is centred around the valley of the River Avon, but it extends from Ower Services on the M27 near Southampton in the east beyond the A354 Salisbury-Blandford road in the west, the extreme western edge of Hampshire. This breadth makes Fordingbridge one of the most physically challenging divisions in Hampshire for the local Member. However, highway communications are generally good with the A338 providing connection along the Avon Valley and the B3078 linking Fordingbridge with Godshill and Bramshaw. The A31 to the south of Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley and Bramshaw parishes provides a relatively clear southern boundary to the division with the noticeable exception of Copythorne, of which the majority of the Copythorne North polling area lies to the south of the A31. Copythorne North was added to this division during a previous boundary review against district council advice.

Fordingbridge encompasses three relatively disparate areas:

1. Five parishes (Breamore, Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne & Whitsbury) are wholly or partly within the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and form the majority of the Downlands & Forest ward.
2. Eight parishes (Bramshaw, Breamore, Copythorne, Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley, Fordingbridge, Godshill, Hale & Hyde) are wholly or partly within the New Forest National Park, with strong social and cultural links to the open New Forest.
3. Fordingbridge parish as an historical market town exhibits strong individual characteristics and acts as a focal point and key shopping area for a number of the surrounding communities within the Fordingbridge division.

This division currently includes the following wards:

- Bramshaw Copythorne North & Minstead
- Downlands & Forest
- Fordingbridge
- Forest North West

Many of the considerations regarding practical boundaries for large rural divisions that apply to Brockenhurst also apply to Fordingbridge. In addition, Fordingbridge has long borders with Dorset and Wiltshire, making any extension in those directions impossible. Councillor Edward Heron, the Member for Fordingbridge, comments:

“The comments made by New Forest District Council to the previous review undertaken in 2002-2004 were largely correct in that representing such a geographically large and dispersed division does present significant challenges. I seek to regularly attend Parish (and the Town) Council meetings, usually attending over 75% of meetings. Some parishes regularly meet on the same date, for example Bramshaw, Copythorne and Ellingham; Harbridge & Ibsley parish councils coincide most months...if I miss any of their meetings it may be three months between my attendances.”

“Whilst the current situation is manageable, although far from ideal, I do not think that the addition of any further parishes within the Fordingbridge division would be sustainable.”

#### **Proposal for Fordingbridge**

- Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 11,300 (-18.4% against forecast Hampshire average)**

#### 9.6 **Lymington**

**2021 Electorate Forecast: 13,174 (-4.9% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers the town of Lymington and its associated shoreline. Lymington is bordered to the north by the National Park and to the south by the western Solent. The town acts as a local service centre for the southern New Forest and is a busy centre for marine leisure activity. A ferry service operates from Lymington to Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight and there is a

shuttle train service between Lymington and Brockenhurst.

Councillor Jacqui England, the Member for Lymington, comments:

“Lymington acts as a hub to surrounding areas as a support mechanism for shopping, social, library, hospital, hospice and doctors’ surgeries. The boundaries are constrained by the geographical infrastructure and the lack of development restricted by NPA Guidelines. The area’s dynamics change with the seasonal patterns and the impact of the increase in visitor numbers has upon the communities and services. The case load is diverse because of the nature of the population and their needs.”

This division currently includes the following wards:

- Buckland
- Lymington Town
- Pennington

Lymington has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is only slightly below the average in Hampshire, so no change is necessary to achieve electoral equality. Other divisions have a lower forecast electorate but given the considerations listed above about the difficulty of expanding outwards into the National Park, no changes to Lymington are proposed.

#### **Proposal for Lymington**

- Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 13,174 (-4.9% against forecast Hampshire average)**

#### 9.7 **Lyndhurst**

**2021 Electorate Forecast: 12,875 (-7.0% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers the town of Lyndhurst and the central strip of the New Forest National Park. Like Fordingbridge it is immensely long, stretching from the border of the city of Southampton all the way down to the border of Christchurch in Dorset. As a result it covers a collection of communities rather than a single one, with Lyndhurst town being the most obvious. The northern and southern boundaries are roughly determined by the two major roads that run through central New Forest from north-east to south-west: the

A35 and the M27/A31. This division currently includes the following wards:

- Ashurst Copythorne South & Netley Marsh
- Bramshaw Copythorne North & Minstead
- Bransgore & Burley
- Lyndhurst

Lyndhurst has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is below the average in Hampshire but within the -10% threshold, so no change is necessary to achieve electoral equality. Given the considerations expressed above therefore no change to Lyndhurst is proposed.

#### **Proposal for Lyndhurst**

- Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 12,875 (-7.0% against forecast Hampshire average)**

#### 9.8 **Milford & Hordle**

**2021 Electorate Forecast: 13,877 (+0.2% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers the coastal area west of Lymington, including the seaside community of Milford-on-Sea, but also stretches inland into the Fernhill area of New Milton, where it is bounded by the South West Main Line. The A337 coastal road runs through the centre of the division. Milford & Hordle includes Hurst Castle, which is the southernmost point in Hampshire. This division currently includes the following wards:

- Fernhill - New Forest
- Hordle
- Milford

Milford & Hordle has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is almost exactly on the average for Hampshire, so no change is necessary to achieve electoral equality and no changes are proposed to its boundaries.

#### **Proposal for Milford & Hordle**

Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 13,877 (+0.2% against forecast Hampshire average)**

## 9.9 New Milton

### **2021 Electorate Forecast: 14,511 (+4.8% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers southern New Milton and the coastal community of Barton-on-Sea. The division is bordered by the sea to the south, the railway to the north, the border with Dorset to the west and designated green space bounded by the main B3058 road to the east. New Milton developed as a coaching stop on the Lymington-Christchurch road and grew rapidly after the railway station was built in 1888. The coast at Barton-on-Sea is a tourist attraction and features notable fossil deposits and a popular coast path. The population in Barton-on-Sea has a higher average age than anywhere else in Hampshire. Councillor Mel Kendal, the Member for New Milton, comments:

“New Milton division is coterminous with New Milton Town Council, which serves Barton-on-Sea and New Milton south of the railway line. Barton residents shop, with adequate bus routes, in New Milton town centre, which falls well within the division and is thus a good linkage for Barton residents who would not be able to identify with any other area. This makes it a coherent geographical and social unit of local government.”

This division currently includes the following wards:

- Barton
- Becton
- Milton

New Milton has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is slightly above the average for Hampshire, so no change is necessary to achieve electoral equality therefore no changes are proposed to its boundaries.

### **Proposal for New Milton**

- Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 14,511 (+4.8% against forecast Hampshire average)**

## 9.10 Ringwood

### **2021 Electorate Forecast: 12,227 (-11.7% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers all of the town of Ringwood and a number of villages to the south along the Avon Valley. Ringwood is the point at which the A31, the main strategic road across the New Forest, crosses the north-south A338 running from Salisbury to Christchurch. To the west the division adjoins Dorset for more than half the length of its boundary, while the eastern half of Ringwood division is located in the National Park. The division of Ringwood includes the only green belt land in Hampshire. This division currently includes the following wards:

- Ringwood East & Sopley
- Ringwood North
- Ringwood South

Ringwood has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is below the average for Hampshire and slightly below the -10% threshold. In normal circumstances the County Council would seek to expand its geographical coverage to achieve greater electoral equality, but as explained above the only two divisions that adjoin Ringwood (Lyndhurst and Fordingbridge) are well below the average, so this division cannot be expanded without worsening the imbalance. Councillor Steve Rippon-Swaine, the Member for Ringwood, also reports that it is locally accepted that further housing development will come forward during the period to 2021. For these reasons no changes to Ringwood's boundaries are proposed.

### **Proposal for Ringwood**

- Retain whole of current division

### **Proposed 2021 Electorate: 12,227 (-11.7% against forecast Hampshire average)**

## 9.11 South Waterside

### **2021 Electorate Forecast: 12,602 (-9.0% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers the south-eastern tip of New Forest district. Its most notable feature is the Fawley oil refinery, but it also includes Lepe Country Park, Calshot Castle, a section of the National Park and a number of villages. Due to its location on the extremity of Southampton Water, South

Waterside Division is somewhat isolated from the rest of Hampshire. This division currently includes the following wards:

- Fawley Blackfield & Langley
- Furzedown & Hardley
- Holbury & North Blackfield

South Waterside has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is below the average for Hampshire but within the -10% threshold. In normal circumstances the County Council would seek to expand its geographical coverage slightly to achieve greater electoral equality, but the only real option for doing this is north into Hythe, which has a completely different community identity and looks north to Southampton and Totton rather than south. The local Member regards the division as being manageable and, with the possible exception of Furzedown, having natural boundaries, bordered as it is on the west by the New Forest, on the east by the Southampton Water and on the south by the Solent. For these reasons no changes to South Waterside's boundaries are proposed.

#### **Proposal for South Waterside**

- Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 12,602 (-9.0% against forecast Hampshire average)**

#### 9.12 **Totton North**

**2021 Electorate Forecast: 12,890 (-6.9% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers the central and western parts of the town of Totton, which stands at the head of Southampton Water, and is effectively the entrance to New Forest district. The division borders Test Valley district to the east and the A326 and the National Park to the west. Totton's main industrial area is within Totton North. This division currently includes the following wards:

- Totton Central
- Totton North
- Totton West

Totton North has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is below the average for Hampshire but comfortably within the -10% threshold. In normal

circumstances the County Council might seek to expand its geographical coverage slightly to achieve greater electoral equality, but this cannot be achieved without expansion into the New Forest National Park, from which the wholly built-up Totton area is very different. Councillor Chris Lagdon, the Member for Totton North, comments that it should remain “an individual division represented by an individual County Councillor because it is in the main very different from other areas within the New Forest, in that it was planned to be as it is; not an area which was added to piecemeal over the years, but planned with its miles of green routes, churches, schools and community centres.”

For these reasons no changes to Totton North’s boundaries are proposed.

#### **Proposal for Totton North**

- Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 12,890 (-6.9% against forecast Hampshire average)**

#### **9.13 Totton South & Marchwood**

**2021 Electorate Forecast: 13,781 (-0.5% against forecast Hampshire average)**

This division covers the southern and eastern parts of the town of Totton, as well as Marchwood further south. The division borders Southampton Water to the east and extends slightly into the National Park to the west. Near Marchwood village along the waterfront are some notable industrial installations, including an incinerator and a power station as well as the UK’s only Military Port. This division currently includes the following wards:

- Marchwood
- Totton East
- Totton South

Totton South & Marchwood has a forecast electorate in 2021 that is almost exactly on the average for Hampshire, so no action is necessary to achieve greater electoral equality. It is also hard to see any way in which the division’s boundaries could be changed without infringing natural communities. According to Councillor David Harrison, the Member for Totton South & Marchwood, expanding to incorporate Ashurst “would have the disadvantage of creating too large a division and again making a division of three very different communities...residents in Totton South (a defined urban area) would be very upset to find that they have been effectively separated from the rest of the town and lumped in with two villages.”

Expansion to the south is theoretically possible – but this would mean crossing the large open space of Dibden Bay into Dibden & Hythe. For these reasons no changes to Totton South & Marchwood’s boundaries are proposed.

**Proposal for Totton South & Marchwood**

- Retain whole of current division

**Proposed 2021 Electorate: 13,871 (-0.5% against forecast Hampshire average)**

9.14 **Proposals for New Forest**

Division name	Members	2021 Electorate (Existing Forecast)	2021 Variance (Existing Forecast)	2021 Electorate (Proposed)	2021 Variance (Proposed)
Brockenhurst	1	11,302	-18.4%	11,302	-18.4%
Dibden & Hythe	1	14,371	+3.8%	14,371	+3.8%
Fordingbridge	1	11,300	-18.4%	11,300	-18.4%
Lymington	1	13,174	-4.9%	13,174	-4.9%
Lyndhurst	1	12,875	-7.0%	12,875	-7.0%
Milford & Hordle	1	13,877	+0.2%	13,877	+0.2%
New Milton	1	14,511	+4.8%	14,511	+4.8%
Ringwood	1	12,227	-11.7%	12,227	-11.7%
South Waterside	1	12,602	-9.0%	12,602	-9.0%
Totton North	1	12,890	-6.9%	12,890	-6.9%
Totton South & Marchwood	1	13,781	-0.5%	13,781	-0.5%
<b>Total</b>	11	142,910		142,910	

Map of Proposed County Council Divisions in New Forest

